



Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer

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Job Overview

The trucking industry plays a key role in moving raw materials and finished products to and from manufacturers and then on to distribution warehouses and retail stores. Products may be transported by various means of transportation such as air, rail, or ship. However, at some point, trucks haul almost everything during the delivery journey because this method of transportation makes door-to-door delivery possible.

Heavy Truck and Tractor-Trailer Drivers operate trucks or vans with a capacity of at least 26,000 pounds gross vehicle weight. Before leaving the terminal or warehouse, Drivers check the fuel level and oil in their trucks. Drivers make sure their cargo is secure. They report equipment that is inoperable or loaded improperly to the dispatcher. Heavy Truck and Tractor-Trailer Drivers transport goods including cars, livestock, and other materials in liquid, loose, or packaged form. Many routes cover long distances from city to city. Some companies use two Drivers on long distance runs. One person drives while the other Driver rests in a berth behind the cab. These long runs may last for many days, with stops only for fuel, food, loading, and unloading.

Long-distance Heavy Truck and Tractor-Trailer Drivers spend most of their working time behind the wheel, but may load or unload their cargo after arriving at the final destination. This is especially common when Drivers haul specialty cargo, because they may be the only one at the destination familiar with the procedures to handle the materials.

Modern technology is changing the duties for long-distance Truck Drivers. Many trucks have Global Positioning Systems (GPS) that allow Drivers to easily obtain travel directions, weather reports, and delivery schedule changes from dispatchers. Satellites and GPS are tools that also help dispatchers track a truck's location, fuel consumption, and engine performance. Some Drivers also work with computerized inventory tracking equipment.

After these Drivers reach their destination or complete their operating shift, the U.S. Department of Transportation requires that they complete reports detailing the trip, the condition of the truck, and the circumstances of any accidents. Drivers are also subject to random alcohol and drug testing while they are on duty.

Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer

Typical Tasks

Truck Drivers, Heavy

- ➔ Drive truck with capacity of more than three tons to transport and deliver cargo, materials, or damaged vehicles.
- ➔ Maintain radio or telephone contact with base or supervisor to receive instructions or be dispatched to new location.
- ➔ Maintain truck log according to state and federal regulations.
- ➔ Keep record of materials and products transported.
- ➔ Operate equipment on vehicle to load, unload, or disperse cargo or materials.

Truck Drivers, Tractor-Trailer

- ➔ Drive tractor-trailer combination, applying knowledge of commercial driving regulations, to transport and deliver products, livestock, or materials, usually over long distance.
- ➔ Maneuver truck into loading or unloading position, following signals from loading crew as needed.
- ➔ Couple and uncouple trailers by changing trailer jack positions, connecting or disconnecting air and electrical lines, and manipulating fifth-wheel locks.
- ➔ Drive truck to weigh station before and after loading, and along route to document weight and conform to state regulations.
- ➔ Maintain driver log according to Interstate Commerce Commission regulations.

*Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.*

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ➔ Operation and Control — Controlling operations of equipment or systems.
- ➔ Equipment Maintenance — Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed.
- ➔ Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- ➔ Transportation — Knowledge of principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
- ➔ Geography — Knowledge of principles and methods for describing the features of land, sea, and air masses, including their physical characteristics, locations, interrelationships, and distribution of plant, animal, and human life.
- ➔ Mechanical — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.
- ➔ Law and Government — Knowledge of laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process.
- ➔ Far Vision — The ability to see details at a distance.
- ➔ Reaction Time — The ability to quickly respond (with the hand, finger, or foot) to a signal (sound, light, picture) when it appears.

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- **Response Orientation** — The ability to choose quickly between two or more movements in response to two or more different signals (lights, sounds, pictures). It includes the speed with which the correct response is started with the hand, foot, or other body part.
- **Static Strength** — The ability to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.
- **Near Vision** — The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
- **Spatial Orientation** — The ability to know your location in relation to the environment or to know where other objects are in relation to you.

Work Environment

Heavy Truck Drivers frequently travel at night, and on holidays and weekends, to avoid traffic delays and to deliver cargo on time. They normally work the most number of hours allowed by federal regulations. Many of the long haul trips keep Drivers away from home several days at a time. Although recent truck model changes in seating, circulation of fresh air, and equipment for seeing improve safety and driving conditions, Drivers may face boredom, loneliness, and fatigue on long trips. Also, vibration, noise, poor weather conditions, and the need to stay sharp and alert can cause physical and mental stress for the Driver. Larger companies generally provide GPS in their trucks. The GPS mapping software assists Drivers by providing the truck's exact location, along with route maps to the next delivery location. However, GPS may be stressful for Drivers not accustomed to the daily monitoring of their activities.

Many Heavy Truck Drivers are members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer				
53-3032	143,500	171,900	5,180	\$14.80 to \$21.38

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Employment of Truck Drivers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer is expected to grow faster than average for all occupations over the 2004-2014 projections period. The demand for Heavy Truck Drivers will remain strong because the increased use of rail, air, and ship transportation requires Truck Drivers to pick up and deliver shipments. The trucking industry is beginning to recruit older couples (age 55 years or older) to meet the hiring demands for long-haul Drivers.

Job opportunities may fluctuate from year to year, because the strength of the economy commands the amount of freight moved by trucks. Employment of Drivers is brisk when the economy is strong. However, layoffs may occur when the economy slows.

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Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers usually follow one of the following training paths:

- ➔ High school diploma or equivalent
- ➔ Vocational schools
- ➔ Adult education
- ➔ Truck driving schools
- ➔ Regional occupational programs
- ➔ Extensive on-the-job training

Heavy Truck Drivers must possess a valid California commercial driver license (Class A) which requires a good driving record and passing a vision and health examination. After obtaining a Class A license, Drivers must submit a medical form/certification every two years. Job seekers must be at least 21 years of age to drive most commercial vehicles in interstate commerce or to transport hazardous materials. For detailed information about how to obtain a Class A California driver license, contact the California Department of Motor Vehicles at www.dmv.ca.gov.

Many vocational and truck driving schools offer Heavy Truck Driver training.

Recommended High School Course Work

High School preparation courses in driver training, automotive mechanics, accounting, general business, business mathematics, and computer technology are helpful. Accounting and business classes are particularly helpful for those who plan to enter self-employment.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search under the following industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ➔ Cement Manufacturing
- ➔ Concrete Block and Brick Manufacturing
- ➔ Concrete Pipe Manufacturing
- ➔ General Freight Trucking, Local
- ➔ Motor Vehicle Towing
- ➔ Other Concrete Product Manufacturing
- ➔ Other Support Activities, Road Transport
- ➔ Ready-Mix Concrete Manufacturing
- ➔ Other Specialized Trucking, Local
- ➔ Other Specialized Trucking, Long-Dist
- ➔ Used Household and Office Goods Moving

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ➔ Brokers-Motor Transportation
- ➔ Freight Traffic Consultants
- ➔ Delivery Service
- ➔ Trucking
- ➔ Freight Forwarding
- ➔ Trucking-Motor Freight

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Where Can the Job Lead?

Advancement opportunities for Heavy Truck Drivers are limited. Advancement may entail driving runs that provide increased earnings or preferred schedules and working conditions. Some long-distance Drivers purchase a truck and go into business for themselves. Many of these owner-operator businesses are successful; however, some fail to earn a profit and go out of business. Drivers considering self-employment should prepare by taking courses to develop skills to run their own business.

Related Occupations

Bus Drivers (see Logistics Profile)

Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators, Forklift (see Logistics Profile)

Material Moving (see *Manufacturing Careers* and Logistics Profile)

Paving, Surfacing, and Tamping Equipment Operators

Truck Drivers, Light (see Logistics Profile)

Railroad Yard Workers (see Logistics Profile)

Other Sources

American Trucking Associations
www.truckline.com

California Department of Motor Vehicles
www.dmv.ca.gov

California Association of Regional Occupational Centers and Programs
www.carocp.org/carocps.html

International Brotherhood of Teamsters
www.teamster.org

Professional Truck Driver Institute
www.ptdi.org

